

observed; chitinous remains of head, legs, mouth parts, and wings were also noticed. The faecal matter, consists exclusively of chitinous remnants of insects, spiders and other arthropods.

*Breeding season.* From the middle of May they are seen in pairs. This is an oviparous species and lays 14 to 15 eggs. From a gravid female fifteen eggs at different developmental stages were collected; five of these eggs were well developed and almost equal in size, the rest were successively smaller. They are whitish in colour and elongated and measure 12.50 mm. in length and 7.00 mm. in width. Very young specimens are seen from the end of August.

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ZOOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA,  
EASTERN REGIONAL STATION,  
SHILLONG-4, ASSAM,  
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## 14. MATING AND OTHER OBSERVATIONS ON SEA SNAKES IN CAPTIVITY

(With a plate)

Death posture of a sea snake has, so far, not been recorded; probably the non-availability of a specimen at death, either from the natural environment or in captivity has precluded such an observation. At the Taraporevala Aquarium, Bombay, sea snakes (mainly *Hydrophis cyanocinctus*) have been kept on display for over 15 years. In nature, they are known to feed on marine eels (*Sodonophis boro*) and *Trypauchen vagina*, this having been ascertained by examining the stomach contents. In captivity, however, they rarely accept food, and

starvation leads to their death within a few months of their capture. Lying dead in their tank, they are invariably found curled up on the bottom like a watchspring, with the head near the centre of the coils (plate, *c*).

Whether the same posture is assumed in nature is not known, since their behaviour in captivity may not be the same as that in nature. Thus, it has been observed that sea snakes, when basking on the sea surface, float with their whole body horizontal. In the display tanks, however, two positions are normally seen. In one, the anterior half of the body is on the floor, and the posterior half remains rigidly vertical, with the tail looped in the shape of a shepherd's crook (plate, *a*). Or the head and some part of the body may skim the surface, and the rest of the body hang limply down (plate, *b*).

Copulation in sea snakes has been reported only once, to our knowledge (1926: Poyntz, A. R., *J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc.* 31: 1038-1039), where too, the species has not been mentioned. On the 19th November, 1966, we had the opportunity to see a pair of sea snakes, *Enhydrina schistosa*, copulating in one of the display tanks at the Aquarium. The male had twisted the hind portion of its body tightly around that of the female, making two and a half turns of its body in tight coils around the female. The tails as well as the anterior portion of the body were quite separate. The region around the vent in the female had become quite turgid, and fishes (*Caranx* sp.) kept in the tank frequently nibbled at the skin in this region. This, however, did not disturb the snakes in the least, which lay on the bottom of the tank in the position indicated in the sketch (plate, *d*). From time to time both the snakes simultaneously rose slowly up to the surface of the water for a breath of air. Copulation was first observed at 12.30 p.m., and the snakes were seen to have separated by 7.30 p.m. the same day.

TARAPOREVALA MARINE BIOLOGICAL  
STATION,  
BOMBAY,  
July 6, 1967.

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